A fouettée pirouette.

are exercises for strength and suppleness, drills for grace, trials of balance. Six days of the week the ambitious dancer practises. Each day the whole "routine" is gone over; but each day is dedicated to special attention to one particular problem. Tuesday, for instance, is *adagio* day, Wednesday the day of *pirouettes*, Thursday of the *allegro*, and so on.

Mademoiselle Louise La Gai, directress of dancing in last summer's session of the University of California, was, prior to her adoption of America as her home, a member of the French national opera ballet. The accompanying extracts from her routines therefore represent essentially the traditions of ballet-trained dancers in all parts of the Occident, since the French academy is the model upon which others have founded their systems of training, as well as their fundamental conceptions of style and grace. In one respect only are those traditions disregarded in the descriptions that follow. Our object being a general idea of the dancer's work, rather than a catalogue of details, we shall violate academic tradition by arranging for our convenience a representative exercise program, irrespective of the habitual place of those exercises on the dancer's weekly schedule.

SEVERAL of the exercises are common to every day's work. For instance, the first proceeding always is to stretch the muscles and ligaments whose tightness may bind movement of the legs. Ma'm'selle takes position with her back to the bar, which is a handrail along the wall, about elbow high on a woman of medium stature. With arms outstretched on the wall, she raises each foot, in turn, to rest it on the bar. When a *corps de ballet* starts this exercise gasps are heard from all parts of the room: muscles contracted overnight protest against re-stretching. That discomfort past, rising and sinking movements warm up ankles, calves, and thighs.

Throughout these and all other movements the dancer observes the tempo with the greatest care. Rhythm, like style, is cultivated incessantly. It is notable that the exercises are performed in units, or multiples, of four. Phrases of steps in dance composition are usually arranged in combinations or sequences to fill four measures of music. The tradition of conforming exercises to this convention is one of a thousand means the academies have evolved for the cultivation of dancer's instinct.

The chief contributor of brilliance is a family of steps called *battements* (the "beats"). As to its mere mechanics, the *battement* is simplicity itself: raising and lowering the whole leg, or the lower leg, to the side or forward. When the whole leg is moved the knee is kept straight, that is a *grand battement*. The *petit battement*, or lower-leg movement, is executed from the raised knee as a fixed pivot. The movement differs from a kick in the respect that emphasis is on the down stroke, like the beat of a bird's wing. The shorter movement can be brought to such a pitch of speed that it conveys a suggestion of the jeweled sparkle of a hummingbird. It is merriment incarnate, this little step: arranged with others to protect it from monotony, rapidly executed by a choral group working in unison, it expresses more laughter than a laugh does; that is, if it observes tempo and form with mathematical precision. One of the purposes of practice is to bring the steps always nearer to the exactness of geometry, sweetened by a relaxed ease of execution. The *battement* follows strictly an imaginary plane, drawn through the body transversely or longitudinally, according as the step is "beaten" to the front or side. Each beat begins and ends at the same point.

The beat of the whole leg naturally cannot have such lightning rapidity as a beat executed by the lower leg only. Nevertheless the *grand battement* in all circumstances stands for lightness. The dancer cultivates the appearance not of *raising* the foot from the floor, but of *releasing* it. At the top of the stroke, however brisk, no jerk marks the stop of the movement. Rather it is as though the foot, in the last half-inch of its flight, ran into a little air cushion. That device denies momentum—and with momentum, of course, weight. The body, kept crisply erect, is not allowed to show any sign of effort. And there you have one of the principles of the dancer's defiance of gravity. Lightness is enhanced by keeping the knee of the supporting leg very straight. A bent supporting knee seems to convey the suggestion of a column crumpling under a strain. To get the straight knee many dancers work for years. To help the knees remember, in moments when the mind is occupied with arms or something else, European instructors sting them with a whip. In spite of every care many a dancer is kept out of the première class by the one vice of awkward knees.

At the end of each set of movements, as for instance the *battements*, tradition imposes a certain pair of stretching exercises; and as these are little known outside the world of the ballet, they perhaps offer you the possibility of a new sensation. The first is aimed at "turning out" the foot and leg. Start by bending the right knee up and outward until the foot is within easy reach of the right hand. Turning the hand thumb down, take a strong hold of the heel. Now straighten the leg out forward and straighten the back as much as possible; then carry the leg, always straight, around in a quarter-circle to the side. Turn the foot out parallel with the floor. That's all. Knock-kneed people cannot do it. Conversely, if begun in childhood, the exercise is said to prevent knock-knees. To the dancer it brings the power to toe out without effort.

The second of the two stretches is started by taking hold of the leg just below the knee-cap. Raise the leg sidewise to horizontal, straighten it as far as you can without losing your grip on it; then move it horizontally in a quarter-circle until it points straight back. The relative position so established between leg and body measures their proper relationship in the *arabesque*. It is to adapt the body to that noble pose that the exercise is designed; it also helps "turn out" foot and leg. If you find that it hurts, there may be comfort in the fact that muscles and ligaments trained daily for years do not really relish this medicine until after they are warmed up. You may question, in fact, whether the ballet's turned-out foot is worth the sacrifice; and there you come upon one of the concrete subjects of controversy between the classic French-Italian ballet on one side, and on the other various new schools more or less influenced by Isadora Duncan.

The arguments over the turned-out foot, "toe work," mathematical precision of movement, and other articles of creed are many and long. The Russian ballet settles the matter by acquiring all the training and traditions of the classic, which traditions they observe or ignore in performance, according to the interests of expression. They add the free expression of the individual temperament.

OF the several steps of the "beating" type, the most dazzling is the *entrechat*—that trick of repeatedly crossing the feet while up in the air. The individual species of *entrechat* are designated by the number of times the feet are made to cross each other; as *entrechat-trois*, *entrechat-quatre*, etc. French terms are commonly used, since French is the accepted language of the dance. Attempts have been made to translate those terms into other languages; but the results are no more needed, nor satisfying, than similar efforts to translate musical terms out of the accepted Italian. For instance, it may be worth mentioning that the word *entrechat* is a corruption of an Italian verb *intrecciare*, meaning to weave or braid. It bears no relation to "between" or to "cat." Its translation might be a contribution to humor, but hardly to understanding.

Owing to the powerful upward spring necessary as an accompaniment of the *entrechat*, its practice falls into the routine of the day devoted to "elevation" (which is exactly what the word implies). Elevation day means an hour and a quarter to try heart and muscles, and fine coördination as well. Beyond mere athletic force, the dancer's great jumps demand catlike descent to the floor, and continuance of movement without disturbing tempo or balance. The athlete's high jump represents a comparatively simple sequence of thoughts,—to spring, lift with arms and legs, and incline his body to clear the bar. The dancer, especially a man, must not only command a good height from the floor, he must at all stages of his flight maintain a graceful appearance of ease. More elevation is expected of men than of women. A man is expected to turn at least a single pirouette in the air, and the ability to make two revolutions is not rare. But women no less than men are responsible for a long, floating turn that accompanies a certain leap, which, although broad and high, is made to seem deliberate. After such a flight to alight without betraying more momentum than that of a falling leaf is a matter of infinite practice and never-ending difficulty.

Practice, practice, more practice! Its eternal repetition accustoms the body, the arms and hands, the legs and feet, to harmonious interrelation, so that the artist's attention during performance may be given undividedly to expression. For every dancer at least part of the practice routine is hard, in compensation for that which each does naturally. For instance, one whose unconsidered movements are long and slow always has to drive herself to keep her "beats" brilliant. "Snappy," quick-moving little people attain brilliance with comparative ease; but their nerves and muscles rebel against the sustained, flowing, often extremely slow,

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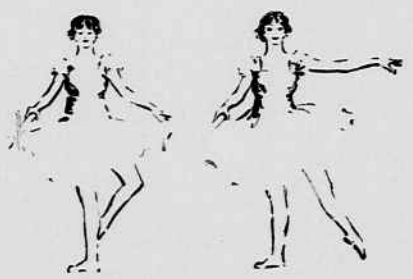
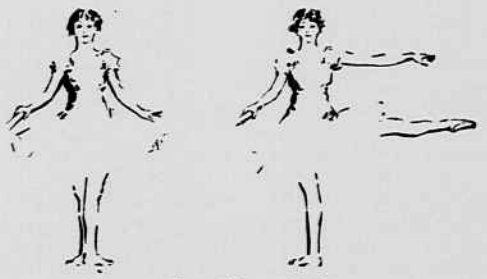
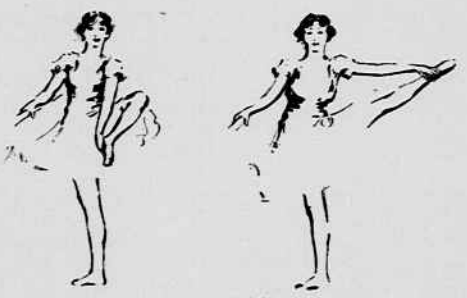


Petit battement.



Grand battement.



To turn out knee and foot.

To cultivate an easy arabesque.

Stretching exercises.

A pirouette "on the crossed ankle."